



# THE ACHIEVER

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## Spellings Calls High School Reform a “National Priority”

**A**t the National Governors Association’s High School Summit on Feb. 27, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings called improving the quality of high school education in America “a national priority,” and promoted President Bush’s High School Initiative to raise achievement levels.

“Getting every child to graduate high school—with a meaningful diploma in hand—is one of the biggest challenges our country faces,” said Spellings at the meeting in Washington. “... Only 68 out of 100 entering ninth-graders will graduate from high school on schedule. Fewer than 20 will graduate from college on time. Meanwhile, 80 percent of the fastest-growing jobs will require some postsecondary education.”

The secretary said the president’s 2006 budget request includes a comprehensive proposal for improving the quality of

secondary education that builds on the standards and accountability provisions of *No Child Left Behind*. She said the law has already proven successful at the lower grades, as evidenced by rising student test scores.

President Bush’s plan includes funding for: developing tests in two additional high school grades in reading/language arts and mathematics; implementing intervention efforts, such as dropout prevention, vocational and technical courses and college awareness programs; and expanding Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs to reach more low-income and minority students.

For the full text of the secretary’s remarks, visit [www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2005/02/02272005.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2005/02/02272005.html).

*“My job as principal,” says Sharon Brittingham, “is to ensure that all staff members work toward the shared belief that all students can learn.” Below, she assists Frankford Elementary School students Yong Kwon Kim and Kalynn Richards with their assignments.*

### Leading High-Achieving Schools

By Sharon Brittingham, Frankford, Del.

**M**ost educators say that all students can learn, but not everyone believes it. I am repeatedly asked how Frankford Elementary is able to achieve such high standards with a population that is highly diverse and highly disadvantaged. (We have an equal amount of Hispanic, African-American and white students, and 79 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.) With this population—nearly one-quarter of whom receive special education—we have achieved big things. And we were honored last year as both a *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon School and a National Distinguished Title I School.

However, there is nothing miraculous about our success. Frankford Elementary is a professional learning community that implements the principles of high-achieving schools. High-achieving schools

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share the same vision, mission, values and goals. My job as principal—as an instructional leader—is to ensure that all staff members work toward the shared belief that all students can learn. It is everyone's job, however, to facilitate that learning.

Several years ago, when I met with the superintendent to set my yearly goals, she questioned whether I had set them too high. I expected 95 percent of my students to meet or exceed the standards. I replied, "If I don't believe it, then who will?" Teachers were told to either believe that all students can learn, or else seek another job. No excuses are acceptable. The instructional leader keeps the vision visible.

I believe that there are five essential elements in creating a high-performing school.

1. *High-achieving schools must have systematic, specific interventions in place for low achievers.* I am responsible for making sure that interventions are in place for struggling students. This begins when students are four years old, through early intervention programs and full-day kindergarten. A master schedule that arranges blocks of time for core content instruction ensures that there is time set aside for individual instruction.

Students can receive one-on-one support through before- and after-school programs, and other supplemental programs.

2. *High-achieving schools have collaborative teams.* Frankford's 36 teachers meet regularly to discuss curricular issues. Tests and writing exercises are collaboratively graded to ensure that the standard of achievement is the same for all. Faculty meetings are scheduled frequently to identify staff needs. Our School Leadership Team, which is made up of one teacher per grade level, plans professional development and collaborates on writing grant applications. To date, these have brought in over \$750,000.

3. *High-achieving schools use data to drive decisions and continuous improvement.* The School Leadership Team uses school-wide data (e.g., student test scores, program evaluations) to write the consolidated grant application, in which we apply for funds for our school improvement plan. Everyone uses data to determine program effectiveness. For every extracurricular program in which a student is involved, there is data to determine what is working and what is not. At the end of the year, teachers participate in "Data Day" to analyze each student's progress. They also review data for students in our feeder schools to help them understand the long-term implications of what they do.

4. *High-achieving schools must gain support from family and community.* As part of our efforts to engage the community, our teachers must contact at least 10 parents a month and meet with every parent at least once during the school year. Our school also hosts family literacy and math

nights, as well as a "Writers' Tea" during which parents hear their children read their writing.

Our community has also given the school overwhelming support. Over 150 people have volunteered as mentors through HOSTS [the model program Help One Student to Succeed]. Volunteers from the Lions Club [an international community service organization] completed vision screening for all preschool and kindergarten children. Frankford residents also have contributed many needed items, such as dictionaries, thesauruses, school supplies, televisions and clothing.

5. *High-achieving schools must develop sustainable leadership capacity at all levels.* In our school, everyone is expected to be a leader in some aspect. Teachers chair the schoolwide discipline committee, content committees and technology committee. They decide the distribution of technology and needed staff development. I conduct conferences at the end of the school year to give staff members the opportunity to share ideas and decide what changes need to be made. I also try to encourage our teachers to attend Aspiring Administrator workshops and pursue higher education.

I know that I cannot achieve results alone. All staff members must be involved in the process of creating a high performing, results-oriented school.

*Sharon Brittingham has been the principal of Frankford Elementary School in Delaware since 1997. She has been in education for 34 years and was honored in 2003 as a National Distinguished Principal.*



Frankford's teachers meet regularly to discuss curricular issues, grade tests and identify staff needs.

Photo by Jerry Jackson

"We must have the vision to see where higher education can take us in a future where both freedom and competition are on the move. This is a world defined less by where you live and more by what you know."

Secretary Margaret Spellings, in her remarks at the American Council on Education's annual meeting, Feb. 14, 2005 in Washington, D.C.

**Did You Know?**

Federal investment in education has grown substantially over the past five years, with discretionary appropriations rising by \$13.8 billion since fiscal year 2001, or nearly 33 percent.

**Close-Up:**



## **No Child Left Behind**

### **2006 Education Budget Proposal**

Last month, President Bush unveiled his plans to build on the goals of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) in his budget request for 2006. The budget provides \$56 billion in discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of Education. Among the highlights of the 2006 budget request are:

#### **Supporting Students in Need**

- \$13.3 billion—a \$603 million increase—for Title I grants to help local school districts carry out NCLB reforms (e.g., enabling all students to achieve high standards, enhancing teacher quality and expanding choices for students and parents);
- \$11.1 billion—a \$508 million increase—for special education grants to states;
- \$676 million for English language acquisition to help limited English proficient students learn English and meet high academic standards; and
- \$500 million for a Teacher Incentive Fund to reward effective teachers and to attract qualified teachers to high-need schools.

#### **Expanding Options for Parents**

- \$219 million for charter schools, plus \$37 million to help charter schools acquire, lease and renovate their facilities; and
- \$50 million for a new Choice Incentive Fund to give parents more opportunities to transfer their children to higher-performing schools.

#### **Improving High School Achievement**

- \$1.24 billion for the High School Intervention Initiative to strengthen high school education and improve the academic achievement of students at risk of falling behind or dropping out;
- \$250 million to measure student performance in reading/language arts and mathematics in high school;
- \$200 million—a \$175 million increase over 2005—for the Striving Readers program to improve the reading skills of teenage students;
- \$125 million for a new Community College Access program to give credit to high school students who take college-level courses;
- \$120 million—a \$90 million increase—for the Mathematics and Science Partnership program to accelerate mathematics learning; and
- A \$22 million increase for the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs in schools with large populations of low-income students and to train teachers for those programs.

#### **Making Higher Education More Affordable**

- \$13.7 billion for the Pell Grant program to increase the maximum award by \$100 to \$4,150;
- \$33 million for an Enhanced Pell Grants for State Scholars program to provide up to an additional \$1,000 to students who complete the rigorous State Scholars program in high school;
- \$50 million for a new Presidential Math-Science Scholars program to provide \$5,000 to low-income students pursuing math and science studies; and
- \$11 million for the new Loans for Short-Term Training program to help dislocated, unemployed, transitioning or older workers and students acquire job-related skills through training programs not currently eligible for federal student aid.

For a summary of and background information on the fiscal year 2006 budget, visit [www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget06/summary/06summary.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget06/summary/06summary.pdf).



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**PRESORTED  
FIRST CLASS**



“When it comes to  
the education of our  
children ... failure is  
not an option.”

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



## **NEW GUIDE!** **Creating Innovative Pathways to School Leadership**

America's schools are meeting the challenge of moving students toward proficiency in reading and math due in large part to strong school leaders who are helping to realize the goals of *No Child Left Behind* at the local level. Attracting high-quality professionals to lead schools where they are most needed is critical to maintaining this progress.

A new publication from the U.S. Department of Education examines how communities are recruiting and training potential leaders from beyond the traditional pipeline of experienced educators. *Innovative Pathways to School Leadership* profiles six pioneering programs that create rigorous routes toward becoming a school principal or administrator for non-traditional candidates.

The Boston Principal Fellowship program, for example, helped Kyle Dodson, who was working as the director of multicultural student affairs at Saint Michael's College in Vermont, overcome the hurdle of obtaining administrative credentials without having to return to school. Within just one year, Dodson, who has a graduate degree in management, was hired as the principal of a new school in Boston. In addition to the six program profiles, the guide outlines criteria for recruitment strategies, an effective selection process and a successful school leadership program.

*Innovative Pathways to School Leadership* is the final publication of a six-booklet series on promising practices published by the Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement. The other titles in the series survey public school choice, supplemental educational services, charter schools, magnet schools, and alternate routes to teacher certification.

For a free copy, while supplies last, contact the Department's publication center at (877)-4ED-PUBS with identification number EU0117P, or visit [www.ed.gov/admins/recruit/prep/alternative/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/admins/recruit/prep/alternative/index.html).